

Kensington and Chelsea Local Board- Look Back and Outlook

2012

At the start of the year we had just settled in as a board and only met twice. One of our first tasks involved joining a panel of residents to select the contractors who would carry on with the regeneration of Wornington Green.

Ardmore was chosen as the preferred contractor. We're pleased to say that all reports tell us this was popular and effective choice. A lot of the time lost through decommissioning the old contractor and commissioning the new one has been regained. In addition, a remodelling of constructions phasing could lead to more decanted residents to move into their new homes much earlier than expected.

This year, we welcomed the opportunity to decide the allocation of the area's *environmental improvement budget*; in an open and transparent way. Catalyst officers worked with residents and other stakeholders from external agencies and in some cases, even developed original bids. The final bids were then presented to the board by lead officers for Kensington & Chelsea. This exercise has been particularly useful because the board has been able to use its influence to help local people solve local issues that, most probably, wouldn't have been picked up by a traditional budget. A variety of small projects, already approved, include – making better use of 'dead space'; sprucing up areas with flora; and tackling localised incidents of anti-social behaviour.

There was a further push to define our roles more clearly for the coming year. It's been decided that our primary focus for the year will be to influence and scrutinise Catalyst's service, to bring about a positive improvement for the people in our area. Those who have been watching performance figures closely would have noticed steady progress is being made. Over and above this, we would like residents and key stakeholders to tell us that we have changed for the better.

Of course the board cannot alone make changes or indeed take sole credit for improvements. We depend on helpful and constructive feedback from residents and knowledgeable, competent and professional staff to make sure that all good ideas are acted upon. At the end of the recent staff restructure, the board can say without any hesitation that we have every confidence in the teams that Lily and Sue now have in place. We are certain that they will give their all to work with us in bringing about the changes we know will make sense. The changes you have told us you need and want.

The welfare reforms are an example of how we have worked with local staff. As a board we have been concerned about some of the implications of the central government's proposals and what they could mean for all affected residents. We don't want our residents to bear the worst of what is coming, simply because they do not have the necessary information to act. The teams have done all that they can to target all those affected and give them every bit of advice and encouragement that they need to make the right choices in response.

In the first year since the local board formed, we lost one of our members because of a potential 'conflict of interest'. However, after seeking legal advice, we have reversed this decision and this board member is now back with us.

We've also been effective in making use of our influence and local connections to quell potential issues of controversy before they became unmanageable. Three issues that come to mind are:

- service charges for street residents;
- alternative use of parts of the adventure playground;
- a fire door key replacement programme.

On all these issues, individual members on the board were able to work with local officers and senior officers within the group to ensure that matters were brought to satisfactory conclusions.

Last year we started our meetings with a series of walkabouts in the local area. We visited Wornington Green recently and were able to note, with pride, the vast changes that are occurring locally.

2013

The New Year for the board is starting with a focussed meeting on Wornington Green. Towards the end of last year, we realised that our scheduled meetings did not give us enough time to look into certain issues the way we would have liked to. Every member agreed that we need to increase our work rate and representation. This means that we'll be increasing the number of times we meet to deliberate and make decisions and recommendations on issues of local importance.

We hope to forge a closer working relationship with other local boards and the main board. We'll be visiting other boards to observe them and see what we can learn. We'll also invite the other local boards to see us in action. The group chair has supported this move and has expressed the wish to visit the Kensington & Chelsea Board in the near future.

This year we will also continue to work closely with Catalyst Gateway, Catalyst's community development charity. We currently have a representative on the Catalyst Gateway board who is due to retire. To ensure that the focus towards Kensington and Chelsea is not lost, we'll be appointing another representative.

We're also drawing up a programme of walkabouts and sessions, with local staff, for the New Year.

This year we're looking forward to implement our agreed working plan, in particular:

1. To build on our improvements in scrutinising Catalyst to ensure there is a constant drive to deliver achievable and positive changes in customer service.
2. To map local activity and establish who else has interest in the local community and shares similar goals and aspirations to the board.
3. To support local staff deliver a service which gets it right the first time.
4. To understand our customers better and deliver relevant and tailored services.
5. To re-launch as a local board and inform all local stakeholders of our values and purpose;
6. To visibly support the first handovers and re-engage with the regeneration programme;
7. To engage with the Kensington Residents' Forum and other local boards to work as one.
8. Seize opportunities to support local initiatives and partnership working; where our local residents would benefit from our involvement.

As you can see this promises to be another challenging but exciting year. We feel we are infinitely better prepared and feel privileged to continue working to improve the local area and lives of all who live, work, play and learn in the local area.

Thank You,

Ian Williams

Chair – Kensington and Chelsea Local Board

January, 2013.